

Science Teaching/Science Learning by Dr. Harcombe is “lively and informative”

by Catherine Crawford, Center for Education

The Center for Education is proud to announce the publication of *Science Teaching/Science Learning* by Dr. Elnora Harcombe by Teachers College Press this spring. Based on her research at the Model Science Lab, which she directs, the book documents how professional teacher development can empower teachers to become better teachers and promote deep understanding and science learning in their students.

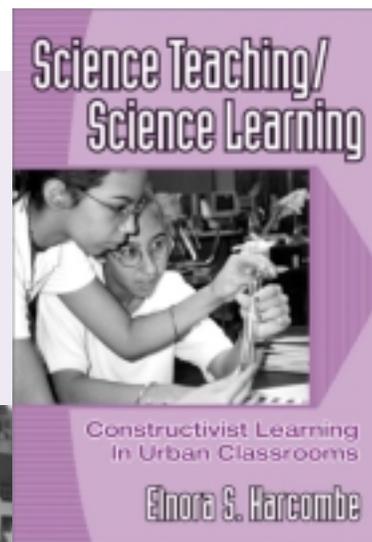
Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, praises *Science Teaching/Science Learning*:

"In this lively and informative report from the front lines of education reform, Dr. Harcombe brings us face to face with many of the central issues that we now face as a nation obsessed with the quality of our children's education. In a novel approach, enriched by her skills as a scientist, the private journals of experienced teachers struggling with the challenge of changing their view of science teaching are skillfully interweaved with carefully selected analyses from the education reform literature. No one who reads this book can be fooled again by proposed quick fixes, or fail to be impressed by the talent, dedication, and professionalism required to be a successful teacher in our schools today."

The book is also recommended by Nel Noddings, Lee Jacks Professor of Education Emerita at Stanford University:

"Early in the 20th century, Alfred North Whitehead urged teachers to teach fewer topics in greater depth. Here we have a powerful story of teachers doing just that and also learning to use hands-on experimentation, peer support, mentoring, in-depth discussion, and enhanced knowledge of how students learn. A terrific model for today's science classrooms."

Science Teaching/Science Learning (ISBN #0-8077-4033-0) can be purchased through Teachers College Press (<http://www.teacherscollegepress.com>).



Dr. Harcombe takes a moment from her book signing at the recent American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in Seattle to talk with Professor Rich Duschl of Vanderbilt University, the editor of the Teachers College Press “Ways of Knowing in Science and Mathematics” series, of which her book is the latest release.



Dr. Bobbi Samuels Teams Up with the School Writing Project

by Gastonia (Terri) Pumarejo-Goodman, School Writing Project

In many ways the work that Dr. Bobbi Samuels has been involved in this year as a consultant with the School Writing Project (SWP) is less of a new assignment than a much-awaited homecoming.

Recently retired from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, as a professor in the education department and as director of the Greater Houston Area Writing Project (GHAWP), Dr. Samuels was looking forward to some quiet time with her family and perhaps continued summer literacy work with GHAWP. Instead, she accepted the invitation to sign on as a consultant with SWP, a role that she describes as one that dovetails with the "common issues and common goals" that she has been involved in for most of her professional life.

One of the most central issues to Dr. Samuels in education today remains the need to establish and maintain teacher-driven professional development. This belief played an important role fourteen years ago in the personal and professional friendship that Dr. Samuels established with Dr. Marvin Hoffman the founder of SWP.

"When I first got involved fourteen years ago with the GHAWP, a National Writing Project (NWP) site, Marv and I talked, and I realized that philosophically we started from the same base. We both believed that the best teachers of teachers are other teachers. Also we shared the philosophy of James Gray, NWP founder at Berkeley, who argued for the importance of a partnership between universities and schools. Over the years we both found common issues and believed that by merging these common goals we could provide a framework to develop strong teacher leaders in the profession," said Dr. Samuels. According to Dr. Samuels there was a natural partnership that developed over the years between the two university-based writing projects. SWP workshops extend over 10 weeks twice a year in the spring and fall. In these teacher-facilitated workshops,



Bobbi Samuels

participants study professional articles on literacy, model and share writing, and observe each other's classrooms once a week over the course of ten sessions. The GHAWP workshops are held twice in the summer, June-July, for four-week intensive sessions Monday through Friday with a couple of workshops also offered through the school year. Many of the teachers who have participated as leaders in both workshops have gone on to transform their classrooms and assume an active role in directing the language arts curriculum in their schools and on a district level. "I feel most proud of the numbers of teachers out there who have become leaders on their campuses or who have become invigorated and renewed in their profession as a result of participation in the two projects," said Dr. Samuels.

Despite the number of successes that both literacy projects have achieved over the years with growing documentation on the impact the work has had on teacher retention and student achievement, Dr. Samuels worries about the "fragility of maintaining the work." "Both groups are fragile because they are so dependent on teacher leadership, yet teachers are so pressed for time. There is also the issue of money. Unless an organization has the time to go

after grants it is difficult to survive. Teacher leaders of ten become fragmented and stressed by the many demands on their time," said Dr. Samuels.

And yet, Dr. Samuels remains determined and optimistic about the future of both projects now that she sees herself in the dual role of advocate for both literacy workshops. "I am a real advocate for teachers and I've always cared about education, particularly public schools. When teachers are leaders, it leads to a kind of domino effect in schools. The results will be reflected in the test scores when classrooms involve meaningful reading and writing experiences, but it has to maintain itself through the training of teachers. I believe the test of a good organization is to go on and make things happen. This is just what occurs with SWP and the GHAWP," said Dr. Samuels.

So for the moment, Dr. Samuels has traded in the prospect of a relaxed retirement for the chance to continue to train and inspire teacher leaders throughout the year in a continued partnership with the two literacy projects that reflect her philosophy for educational improvement and reform. "This chance to work with SWP came at a perfect time for me. I had just retired from UH-Clear Lake and was looking for ways to extend my commitment to teachers and to literacy instruction. Working with both SWP and GHAWP offered me a way to continue the work I believe in so strongly."

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What Keeps Teachers Going?*

by Linda McNeil, Codirector, Center for Education

Cautioned by technical and market models of school reform which, in the words of Mike Rose, can be “despairing and dismissive... shutting down our civic imagination,” Sonia Nieto set out to examine the tension between the *limitations* placed on schools by their sociopolitical context and the *possibilities* that public education could still adhere to in its “noble purpose” of fostering democratic schooling.

The more she investigated the institutional and structural nature of the limitations – persistent inequalities of funding, rigid tracking, low expectations of students who embody differences – the more Nieto wondered “what keeps teachers going?” Not as naïve as she had been in her youthful days as a beginning teacher, she no longer saw teachers as the heroic individual saviors of public schools. Nevertheless, she kept encountering teachers who made the critical difference in providing positive possibilities for children in their classrooms.

In her Creekmore Colloquium at Rice University on March 28, Nieto presented the findings of her recent study of a group of Boston public school teachers who over the course of a year explored with her the question of “what keeps teachers going – despite everything?” Their monthly meetings centered on their teaching, their students, their frustrations about the many problems left to be solved in their schools. Their year of regular conversations yielded a complex picture of what it takes to sustain teachers.

Autobiography: Teachers stay with teaching because of the life story that brought them into teaching: an African-heritage teacher from the Caribbean learned of slavery as a child and saw the denial of literacy to slaves as its direst oppression. She saw that in such a life, a teacher could be a Moses. She decided to be a teacher. The son of a socialist activist, himself the son of an orthodox Jew, directed the strong family commitment to justice into a decision to teach. A life story that led to teaching helped sustain these teachers.

The Students: All of the teachers at some point said “they are the reason I am here.” The *they* needed no antecedent for what one teacher described as “a fundamental belief in the lives and minds of students,” what Nieto calls a “solid faith in the capability of students to learn.”

Hope, Anger and a Vision of What Could Be: Nieto does not locate the hope of schools in isolated teachers who close their doors in order to survive. Rather she documents the sustaining power of anger – anger toward the injustices in the system, anger at communities who seem not to care, anger at the arbitrariness of administrative decisions. She told of Karen, a teacher so determined to teach math in a classroom completely devoid of materials, who made her students paper protractors and rulers – and watched as all year they guarded them in their binders as precious – for doing their homework and for knowing their teacher was convinced they could learn. Nieto shows how teaching that is sustainable is politically aware and active, cognizant of the



Dr. Sonia Nieto was this year's Hazel G. Creekmore Memorial Symposium keynote presenter on March 27. A Professor of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Dr. Nieto spoke about “Effectively Educating Latino Students: What Teachers Need to Know.” She also led a seminar discussion on March 28, “What Keeps Teachers Going Despite Everything” with Linda McNeil and Mary Selvas, a readings specialist at Deady Middle School. Dr. Nieto and Mary Selvas take a break after their seminar. “Affirming Diversity” is the theme of this year's library acquisitions for the Hazel Creekmore Memorial Curriculum Collection.

sources of indignities and inequalities, not just grieved by their effects.

Intellectual Work and the Craft of Teaching: Nieto cites Freire's letters to “teachers who dare to teach” and a teacher named Steve, who writes to a young colleague, as strong voices for teaching as craft, as inquiry, as intellectual work. The intellectual work of teaching sustains the mind of the teacher, connects the teacher to others in this work, and renews what the teacher most distinctively has to offer the students.

Teacher-proof curricula, standardized outcomes, low pay, de-skilled working conditions all mitigate against “teacher retention.” Sustaining the intellectual work of teaching, affirming the life choices that led to teaching, getting smart about the sociopolitical factors shaping our schools, and centering on a confidence in the children – to Nieto and her teachers, these are what keep teachers going, keep the *possibilities* of schooling open and alive.

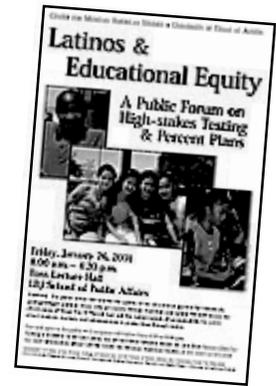
***Sonia Nieto, *What Keeps Teachers Going? And other Thoughts on the Future of Public Education*, Journal of Excellence and Equity in Education (April, 2001).**

Latinos & Educational Equity

Public Forum on High-Stakes Testing and Percent Plans

by Laurie Hammons, Center for Education

Linda McNeil, co director of the Center for Education, was one of several invited speakers to participate in the January 26 "Latinos and Educational Equity" forum held at the University of Texas in Austin which was sponsored by the Center for Education at Rice University, the Center for Mexican American Studies and Office of the Provost at the University of Texas at Austin, the University of California System, the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, the Harvard Civil



Dr. McNeil and Dr. Valenzuela at the *Latinos and Educational Equity Conference* in Austin.

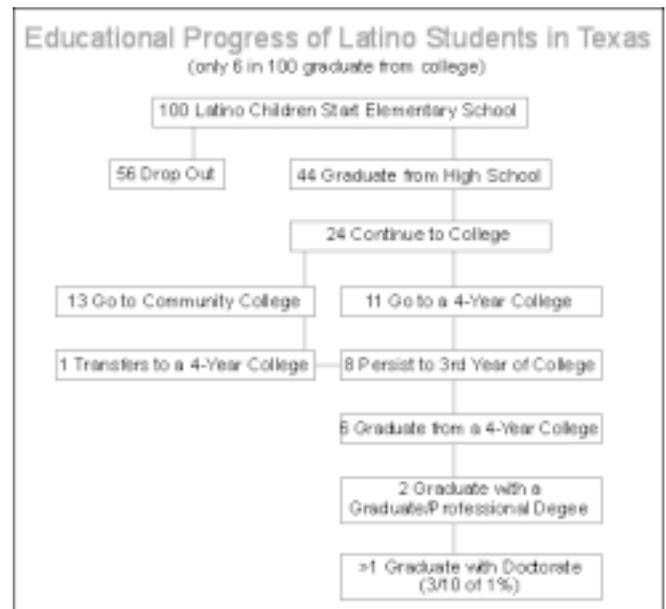
Rights Project at Harvard University, the International Reading Association, and the Inter-University Program for Latino Research. The goal of the forum was to address the quality of the educational pipeline for historically underprivileged, mostly African American and Hispanic youth in Texas. The forum included Texas Representative Irma Rangel; Texas Senator Gonzalo Barrientos; Education Commissioner Jim Nelson; Gary Orfield of Harvard University; Uri Treisman of the Dana Center; Gerald Torres, the Vice Provost of UT-Austin; Eugene Garcia, Dean of the College of Education at the University of California-Berkeley; and Alex Saragoza, Vice Chancellor, University of California System. Angela Valenzuela, Director of the Latino-Family School Connection at the Center for Education, and Associate Professor in the department of Curriculum and Instruction and Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas-Austin, organized and moderated the conference.

The conference was prompted by two forces that threaten the education of Latino children, our fastest growing student population: high stakes testing in public schools, which is resulting in dramatically higher drop out rates; and the Hopwood decision

which negates many of the gains of affirmative action in opening up university and professional school admissions to Latinos and African Americans.

The Honorable Irma Rangel gave the opening keynote address, in which she called for an end to the disparities in Texas schools. She criticized the increasing use of waivers in minority schools to get around the limits on class size, and the use of "emergency certification" which puts non-certified teachers in classrooms of disadvantaged children who need the most qualified, experienced teachers. In regard to TAAS, she stated that teachers need to be evaluated on patience and compassion, not just test scores, and felt that we need to put our faith in well-qualified teachers who are already testing and assessing children. Rangel also felt that we should be asking, "What problems are we overlooking?" instead of encouraging some students to flee low performing schools in order to boost TAAS scores. She is also concerned about the out-of-town businesses being paid millions of tax dollars to create our test system. She believes that we are cheating our students and ourselves by allowing the existence of inferior schools.

Dr. Valenzuela opened the High Stakes Testing session by presenting a chart (see right) documenting the failure of Texas public schools to assure an education for Latino youth. In seeking explanations for this dismal record, she said, "In the spirit of democracy, we are obliged to discuss our differences." Dr. Uri Treisman, of the Dana Center, spoke in support of the TAAS system, using rising TAAS scores as evidence of improvement in student learning. Dr. Linda McNeil, of Rice University, spoke of the harmful effects of TAAS, explaining that much of the gain in TAAS scores was the result of test-prep in many schools and, even more seriously, the rise in school scores reflected the fact that thousands of students drop out before critical testing years.



Source: Solorzano, Daniel and Tara Yosso. (2000). "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Chicana and Chicano Education" (). In C. Tejeda, C. Martinez, and Z. Leonardo (Eds.), *Demarcating the Border of Chicana(o) Latina(o) Education* (pp. 35-65). Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton Press.

Panelists Carol Holst of Parents United to Reform TAAS Testing, Al Kauffman of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Richard Valencia of the University of Texas-Austin spoke of the harmful effects of TAAS from their perspectives as parent, civil rights lawyer and psychologist. Joe Johnson of the

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Life After Hopwood

Percent Plans in Higher Education

by Laurie Hammons, Center for Education

As the mother of a White (Anglo) college student, I was not sure if the afternoon session of Latinos and Educational Equity conference, “Percent Plans in Higher Education,” would be of much relevance to me. However, it was not only quite interesting, but I came away feeling extremely hopeful about the future of the higher educational system in Texas.

The series of judicial decisions and the opinion known as *Hopwood* began in 1995 when the Texas Supreme Court ruled that the University of Texas Law School’s affirmative action plan was unconstitutional. In 1996, the 5th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled on the appeal of the initial Hopwood decision. They concluded that race cannot be used as a factor in deciding which applicants to admit.

Fortunately, many Texans were committed to seeing that opportunities for higher education were open for all students. At the conference, State Representative Irma Rangel of Kingsville spoke about the bill that she introduced in 1997 making the top 10% of each high school graduating class eligible for admission to state universities. Since many of Texas’ schools are quite segregated, this gives a widely diverse group of students an opportunity to attend college.

Two questions about this plan have been raised: How does this admission plan affect the scholastic quality on the university level? Is it an effective way to admit and attract minority students?

Dr. Eugene Garcia from the University of California at Berkeley discussed California’s similar percentage plan in their higher education system. They are finding that their students with a 4.65 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) and a 1600 SAT have a 90% completion rate. Their students who have a 3.5 GPA and a 1050 SAT *also* have a 90% completion rate. So it isn’t just SATs and GPAs that predict success. How does an admissions officer decide whom to admit? How does s/he know who is likely to succeed at their institution? There is more emphasis now on looking at what elements are critical to school success, rather than just using test scores for the decision.

Dr. Gerald Torres, professor at the UT-Austin School of Law, stated that with this percentage plan there has been a slight drop in the mean SAT (about 30 points), but an increase in students continuing to graduation. (For African Americans, 94.5% stay after freshman year.) “We are outperforming earlier years—over all majors,” said Dr. Torres. So while there are huge disparities in the levels of local school financing which affects students’ SAT scores, there has been no reliable measure of an individual student’s will to obtain a college degree, though high class rank has been shown to be quite effective. This measures the student’s ability to succeed in whatever environment exists at his/her own high school. By utilizing this percent plan, Texas is giving the opportunity to succeed to students who might otherwise be passed over.

The University of Texas-Austin has made a real effort to recruit minorities after the Hopwood decision outlawed affirmative action. Each year, UT picks a number of high schools that have not been sending graduates to UT-Austin. The president of UT visits these schools and speaks to their 9th graders, informing them that UT will give full tuition and dorm scholarships for four years to the top two to four students from their graduating class.

As a result of these visits, instead of admitting only two students, UT often accepts 10-13 students from the identified schools, as these students now think about college as a possibility and become motivated to take college prep courses. If the students are from low-income families, they are eligible for other tuition aid and can attend the university even if they are not one of the top two to four students in their graduating class. Before this recruitment campaign was initiated, 150 high schools comprised 75% of UT admissions; UT now accepts students from 700 high schools across Texas.

Furthermore, when these students are admitted to UT, they become “Longhorn Scholars” and are housed with other Longhorn Scholars in order to establish a peer group, since many are the first in their families to attend college. Advisors are also available to advise the Scholars on their course selections and other aspects of college life.

I was impressed that UT-Austin hasn’t just accepted the Hopwood decision and shrugged its shoulders. According to Gary Orfield of the Harvard Civil Rights Project, Texas A&M (without a similar outreach program) finds that since Hopwood, enrollment is down 21% for African Americans, and 19% for Latinos. Minority enrollment at UT-Austin, however, has remained constant. This indicates the success of the UT-Austin minority recruitment effort, and the need to inform students about their opportunities for higher education.

As Tony Sanchez, member of the UT System Board of Regents said, “Texas will have 90% ‘minority’ students by 2015.” Can we afford to leave these students behind?



RECENT CENTER EVENTS

Growing Literate Children: What Teachers Need to Know



Patsy Cooper, Consulting Director for the School Literacy & Culture Project (SLC), talks with teachers during a breakout session at the February 17 miniconference “Growing Literate Children: What Teachers Need to Know” for preschool and primary teachers sponsored by SLC. Nearly 150 teachers of children ages two through eight participated in the daylong conference at Rice University. Dr. Cooper also gave the keynote address, “Learning to Teach Reading All Over Again.”

Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century



Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond spoke on March 1 at Rice University as part of the Distinguished Lecture Series co-sponsored by the Center for Education and Houston Annenberg Challenge. Dr. Darling-Hammond, who is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at Stanford University, and Executive Director of the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, addressed the issue of “Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century.” She and Dr. Linda McNeil talk after her presentation.

Benavidez Elementary School Receives Gift of Books

Connie Floyd, Director of Cultural Conversations for the Center for Education, presented Diana De La Rosa, the principal of Benavidez Elementary School in HISD, with over 40 books donated to the school by the faculty, staff and board of the Center for Education. The books included folktales, science, geography, multicultural stories, and biographies, some of which were bilingual or in Spanish, as well as in English. The books will be distributed to the school library and classroom libraries.





School Writing Project Student and Teacher Readings

Almost 50 students participated in this spring's School Writing Project (SWP) Elementary and Middle School Readings on April 5 at Rice University. Students, kindergarten through 8th grade, from nine HISD schools, were present. The students, whose teachers are SWP participants, read from their own writings, sometimes reading in Spanish and Vietnamese, as well as English. Several teachers also shared their own writings.



More than 25 high school students read their works at the SWP High School Readings on April 26 at Rice University. Students and teachers from Milby High School, Furr High School, Bellaire High School, Jones High School and St. John's School shared their poems, journal entries and stories. Portfolios and a quilt of stories by Terri Goodman's students from Bellaire High School were also displayed. The readings, which are held each spring, showcase the students of teachers participating in the School Writing Project.

Does Race Matter?

White Teachers of Black Children

by Bernie Mathes, School Literacy & Culture Project

Who are the White teachers who effectively teach Black children? Can White teachers be culturally relevant pedagogues of Black children? These are some of the questions posed by Dr. Patsy Cooper, assistant professor at Hofstra University, founder and consulting director of the School Literacy and Culture Project. Addressing a standing-room-only crowd at her January 22 seminar on the Rice campus, Cooper discussed her study of effective White teachers of Black children, contrasting their practice to that of effective Black teachers described in the literature.

Curriculum

Concerning curriculum, Cooper noted that the salient feature of the teachers' pedagogy was the expectation that they would teach well and that all children would learn. Cooper noted that "while some hands-on instruction was observed, the overarching teaching method for all subject areas was teacher-led and text-driven instruction." Contradicting assumptions, Cooper found that "overwhelmingly, the children appeared engrossed in these teacher-directed lessons." She attributed the children's engagement to the teachers' delivery style and clear expectations. This was similar to the Black teachers described in the literature. By contrast, whereas the Black teachers were equally direct about their insistence on Standard English mastery, Cooper found the White teachers much more indirect in their emphasis on Standard English usage. Cooper attributed this to an unwillingness to call attention to specific cultural issues.

Discipline Style

"The White teachers' approach to discipline was overt and firm and paralleled the style of Black teachers reported in the literature. I labeled the approach 'authoritative,' which

emphasizes the use of power for the student's good and is sanctioned by the target community," explained Cooper. Recognizing that this approach might at times appear insensitive or controlling to outsiders, Cooper noted that the White study teachers and the Black teachers in the literature were confident in their discipline style, believing that the children understood the caring behind it. Cooper noted that the students responded well to this authoritative style.

Teacher as Substitute Mother

One of the prominent themes in the data was the teachers' view of themselves as substitute mothers, grounded in the belief that the children loved and needed them. Cooper said, "At its most basic level, the teachers' mothering roles were found in a daily concern for the children's physical health and comfort. Being a 'teaching mother' also meant relating to the children as persons with feelings, wanting attention, needing respect and capable of being hurt or embarrassed." In turn, children who feel cared about learn more.

Personal Norms/Racial Consciousness

Like the Black teachers in the literature, the White teachers in the study appeared to bring personal norms to bear on their teaching that reflected their views on race and race relations. These were summed up as "respect for and commitment to the Black community, empathy for Black children, willingness to learn from the Black community, and finally, an articulated sense of social justice." Problematically, although all study teachers acknowledged the problem of teaching Black children in a racist society, they did not make direct reference to race in the classroom. "The absence of race-based dialogue around the realities of racism proved to be a very significant difference between the White teachers in the study and Black teachers in the literature." This finding was foreshadowed in the lack of direct discussion around Standard English.

Does Race Matter?

The best teachers of Black children share the community's belief in "the power of education over oppression and discrimination and in values such as discipline, resilience, achievement, and hard work," according to Jacqueline Jordan Irvine in her theory of cultural synchronization. Ideally, Irvine suggests, education can promote children's Black identities through a deliberate focus on the Black culture and experience. The White teachers in Cooper's study exemplified the community's belief in the power of education, but did not provide a focus on specific racial issues. Drawing on Irvine, Cooper concluded that in the absence of the ideal, success in school ultimately serves racial socialization and a developing racial consciousness. Thus, without ignoring the real limitations of the teachers' lack of classroom focus on race, it is possible to see how the White teachers were perceived as effective by their students' community.



Patsy Cooper, Consulting Director of the School Literacy & Culture Project, talks with teachers after her presentation on January 22.

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“I Wrote a Story.”

The School Literacy & Culture Project Teams Up with HISD and Head Start to Get Pre-Kindergarten Students “Ready to Read”

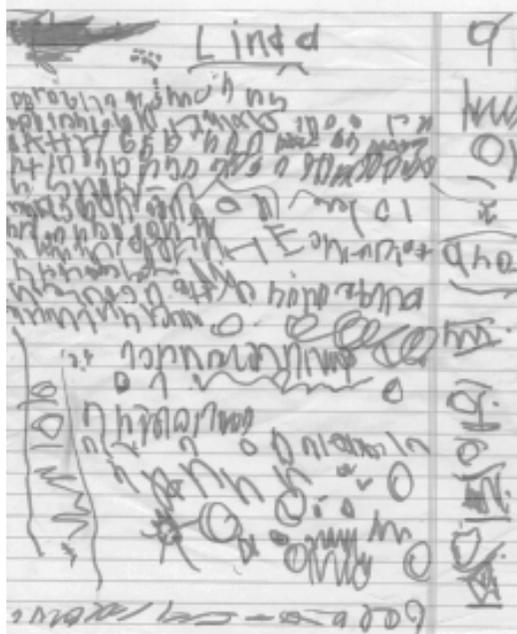
by Margaret Immel, School Literacy & Culture Project

Elizabeth and Emily sat at the corner of the writing center table. Elizabeth held a clipboard and pen poised to write as she leaned toward Emily and said in Spanish, “Tell me your story.” As Emily began to dictate her story Elizabeth listened carefully. When Emily ended her first idea, Elizabeth wrote down the words, saying each word as she wrote it. When she had finished writing the last word of the first sentence, she again leaned toward Emily as the signal for her to continue with the story. As Emily continued telling, Elizabeth would sometimes ask questions to help the story progress or for clarification. The scene continued that way until the paper was filled with print.

This scenario happens everyday between teachers and children across the Houston area in Classroom Storytelling Project classrooms. The difference here is that Elizabeth and Emily are both four-year-olds who are pre-kindergarten students in a Houston Independent School District/Head Start Collaborative bilingual classroom. The HISD teacher and one Head Start teacher are two of the teachers ending their year of professional development in the Classroom Storytelling Project, an early literacy professional development program that the School Literacy and Culture Project offers. They are two of the twenty teachers whose participation was made possible by a Ready to Read grant that HISD received for the 2000-2001 school year. The Texas Ready to Read grant is a state initiative with major goals of providing scientific, research-based instruction for improving pre-reading skills and for identifying cost-effective models for pre-reading intervention for pre-kindergarten children. Eight preschool classrooms, half regular pre-K classrooms and half HISD/

Head Start Collaborative classrooms, at seven HISD schools were selected as the pilot classrooms. In HISD/Head start collaborative classrooms, every effort was made to have the HISD teacher and one of the Head Start teachers participate.

Most of the selected teachers attended SLC’s Reading, Writing, and Cultural Connections Summer Institute in July 2000, which paved the way for the



A story transcribed by a 4-year old pre-K student in this year’s HISD/Headstart “Ready to Read” program for which the Classroom Storytelling Project provided professional development.

yearlong Classroom Storytelling Project work that began in early September when Mentor Teachers began routine visits to the classrooms. Mentor Teachers coach the Resident Teachers to use their students’ own dictated stories to further oral language development and pre-reading skills. As teachers began to implement the work with their students, they saw how much the

children enjoyed the activities, but more so, how much they were learning about reading and writing. In October Olga Antonetti, a Montessori teacher from Garden Oaks Elementary, reflected, “Every day I see tremendous value in the ‘story’ work we are doing in the classroom. It is great to be able to cover all the objectives in the Language Arts strand in such a productive activity that the children enjoy so much and are growing from as well.”

At the monthly seminars, teachers discussed pertinent professional texts and shared stories about the children and their stories and about their developing literacy. They reported increased language and vocabulary development among their students. Flora Henry-Smith, Crockett Elementary, stated, “The children are also picking up English very quickly. The parents are so happy; the children go home and recreate the stories they have dramatized in class.” Carol Moore, Southmayd Elementary, wrote, “The stories the children are dictating are becoming more and more elaborate. Their vocabularies are strengthening and their ways of expressing their thoughts are growing.”

Teachers also shared stories about how the children were actively choosing to be readers and writers by their purposeful choices to work at the writing center writing their own or their friends’ stories or copying lists of familiar words. Vickie Jackson, Field Elementary, reported in October, “My students are having a wonderful time in the writing center... I could see letter recognition, left to right, following print, etc.” Lisa Crouch, Benavidez Elementary, said that when the sign-in sheets were not out at the beginning of the day the children were quick to remind her.

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continued from previous page, "I wrote a story."

"Never before have my pre-kindergartners all been able to write their names legibly by January. I credit 'Ready to Read' for the sign-in sheet idea." Pam King, J.R. Harris Elementary, wrote, "My students can recognize each other's names. Most of them can even distinguish between the six names that start with 'A'."

When we look at the children we see happy, eager and confident faces. Four-year-old Linda sat at the table in the home living center with a sheet of paper, just like the one her teacher uses for writing the dictated stories, and an orange marker. She sat talking to herself making mark after mark after mark. Watching her mouth as she wrote I could see that she was making a mark for almost every syllable of her story. On closer look I could see that many of the marks were "N" and many of them were squiggly marks that resembled adult cursive writing. As she wrote she followed a top-down, left to right order always moving back to the left side of the paper when she began writing on a new line. I was very excited by what I could observe about the many important pre-reading and writing skills she had developed. When she was finished, she brought the story to the teacher and said, "I wrote a story." We all congratulated her and the teacher asked if she would like to act it out at circle time when they acted out the dictated stories. She, of course, said, "Yes." After the two dictated stories were dramatized, the teacher called Linda up to the front of the group. She stood there confidently holding her paper as she had seen her teachers hold the dictated stories. She began to read in Spanish, "One day there was a cat." She selected one of her classmates to come up and be the cat. Linda told the cat to "meow," and the cat did. Then she continued, "A fox came and chased the cat." A fox was chosen and came up and chased the cat. "Then a dog came and chased away the fox." A dog was chosen and came up to chase away the fox. Linda directed the dog to bark and he did. "The dog and cat are friends. The End." We all clapped for Linda and her cast as they took their bows. The broad smile on the face of this once shy, almost never talking or participating child said it all.

This story work does have a strong impact on getting our youngest students "ready to read." Rosemary Salinas, Southmayd, wrote, "This is a wonderful project. It's the icing on the cake. It helps kids love stories and acting them out. As a result they like to read and write."

The Texas Ready to Read goal of improved instruction in pre-kindergarten classrooms through professional development was also met. Teachers commented on the opportunities to learn from their mentors, from the readings, from visiting model classrooms, and from each other through the seminar discussions.

- "The storytelling project has changed me. It really turned my teaching style upside down. I'm amazed. I am more conscious of literacy now in every lesson and I bring it into every lesson."
- "This year I provided many more experiences with print and the children are making the connection. They have a love for reading and writing I've never seen before."
- "My classroom environment now has more emphasis on literacy...In my previous years of teaching I did not have much dramatization. I think I didn't even like it. Now it is an everyday routine and I love to see them express themselves. How much they have grown intellectually! I really did learn and I really, really like the program."
- "I am more aware of the stories I select. I am more dramatic. I observe the children individually with more detail. Teaching is extremely fun. I am more flexible. It was an extreme pleasure to be in such a great training experience. Thank you."
- "...it has given me the opportunity to get to know them (students) on a more individual basis. I've gotten to know personal aspects of their lives that I might not have known; therefore, changing the way I might react to situations which then affects the classroom environment. By getting to know my kids, I've geared my teaching to reach them in a more effective way."
- "Thanks for adding more tools and resources to make me a better teacher."
- "This project has been such a rewarding time spent in professional growth."

continued from page eight, Does Race Matter?

Implications

If White teachers are to be effective teachers of Black children, Cooper suggested that teacher education programs need to "help White teachers understand the Black community's rich history and traditions around the education of its children. Certain beliefs and practices, such as the view of teachers as substitute mothers or authoritative disciplinarians, need to be considered as possible goals. Also, White teachers must consider the need to talk openly about race in classrooms."



continued from page 4, Latinos & Educational Equity

Dana Center and the Texas Education Agency echoed Dr. Treisman's support of TAAS.

Treisman prefers to rely on testing rather than on teachers, stating the need to rely on a system rather than "the accident of good teaching." He stated that accountability encourages support from business and politicians. He recommended that we look to the strongest teachers to find out what makes them successful and make fundamental changes in the way we organize our high schools.

Linda McNeil of the Center for Education stated that the apparent rise in TAAS scores masks negative test practices used to bring up the test scores, and the declining number of students. Dr. McNeil feels that we have never known more about the ways children learn and have never had more to teach our children, yet this is not reflected in the current system which is so focused on the TAAS test. "It should be a great time to be a kid," stated Dr. McNeil, except that creative curriculum and creative teachers are being driven from the public schools as more importance is placed on test scores. She added that one of the greatest problems with the implementation of the accountability system is that in reality it covers up the old inequities in school resources and teachers, and creates new inequities, as the schools who are the farthest behind spend more of their time and dollars on test preparation instead of creating rich curricula that could bring a meaningful education to those students most at risk.

Richard Valencia of the University of Texas-Austin spoke on the politics of measurement. He felt that "to measure is to have the power to define, and thus, the power to control," and that standardized testing is a form of control, without any consideration to prior discrimination and inequity that would necessitate additional resources and specialized instruction to help students succeed. The state of Texas, said Dr. Valencia, is ignoring the literature on the way children learn, and instead relies on threats of failure, which in turn lead to an increased rate of drop outs.

Al Kauffman, lead counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, spoke of past and current inequities. He stated that the TAAS is the latest in a long line of measures that have kept Latino students in a disadvantaged position. First, Latinos were not allowed in the public schools, then relegated to segregated schools, next "tracked" into low-content classrooms, and now the TAAS is used as an exact yardstick to deny promotion, graduation, and substantive instruction. Instead of more testing, Mr. Kauffman proposed increasing the funding for teachers and school buildings in low income areas to equal that of middle-class schools, further reducing class size for at-risk students, and strengthening the successful bilingual program.

Mr. Kauffman contended that much of the gains in test scores are the result of gains already made, such as a reduction in class size. He disagreed with claims that there is an increase in local control as a result of the accountability system. He believes that just the opposite is occurring as schools place test scores above all other goals. Mr. Kauffman closed by reminding us not to forget the extremely high dropout rates and "the people forgotten, the people left behind" by these so-called gains.

Joe Johnson represented the Dana Center and the Texas Education Agency, which controls the implementation of the TAAS system. He stated that this system has caused teachers to pay attention to student achievement. He acknowledged unequal funding and staffing in the state's schools, and stated that we need to build the capacity of schools to meet the requirements of accountability. He stated that institutional accountability must precede school accountability, and that school accountability must precede student accountability.

Carol Holst, a founder of the Parents United to Reform TAAS Testing, said that we need to shed light on the "Texas Miracle" by looking at what has been done in order to achieve the gains that are reported. Ms. Holst recommended that tests be used for diagnostic purposes only and believes that the pressure on schools to raise test scores has made the situation in schools much worse, as schools lose excellent teachers who refuse to see the profession reduced to test preparation exercises. She feels that we need to fight the trend toward reducing a student's identity to a test score and said that parents need to become more involved in their students' schooling. Ms. Holst brought cheers from the audience with her slogan, "No Más TAAS!"

A spirited question-and-answer session followed. Jessica Farrar, state representative from Houston, complained of Department of Education officials who claim that "they're passing the test, so they must be learning" while NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scores are stagnant and that the dropout rate is rising at an alarming rate. Dr. Valencia agreed, stating that we have a false sense of security that our children are succeeding. A legislator from Bryan recommended that each person needs to become politically involved around this issue by contacting legislators and voting for those who support needed reforms.

In the afternoon session on Percent Plans in Higher Education (see article on page 5), Alex Saragoza, Vice Chancellor of the University of California System, and Eugene Garcia, Dean of the College of Education at UC-Berkeley, spoke on California universities, post-Hopwood, followed by the afternoon keynote address by Texas Senator, The Honorable Gonzalo Barrientos. The afternoon session was moderated by Blandina Cardenas of UT-San Antonio, joined by Gary Orfield of the Harvard Civil Rights Project and Gerald Torres, Vice Provost of UT-Austin. Panelists included Jorge Chapa of Indiana University, Patricia Gandara of UC-Davis, Scott Miller of eHigherEducation.com, and Michael Olivas of the University of Houston. The Honorable Tony Sanchez of the University of Texas System Board of Regents closed the conference with a keynote address calling for true equity in education.

The success of this conference could be felt in the excitement of the attendees: teachers, parents, legislators, researchers, university faculty and administrators, and a busload of students from a school in South Texas. Even though there are strong disagreements among the critics and proponents of TAAS, both sides expressed concern about the quality of education for the students of Texas.



•UPCOMING EVENTS•

June 11 - 29, 2001 - Creative Summer Writing Program for Young People (cosponsored by School Literacy & Culture Project and Writers in the Schools), Mark Twain Elementary and Pershing Middle School

July 16-20, 2001 - Reading, Writing and Cultural Connections Summer Institute, Rice University

September, 2001 - Booksigning for Dr. Elnora Harcombe's *Science Teaching/ Science Learning* (date and location to be announced)

November 8 - 10, 2001 - Fall Forum (sponsored by Coalition of Essential Schools), Seattle, Washington

For more information about these events, the Center for Education or its projects, please contact us at (713) 348-5145. Also, visit our website at <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~cteduc>



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